

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1, 3, 10, 14, 20, 22-24 and cancel Claim 2:

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1. (Currently Amended) A metallic, small opening beverage can end closure adapted for receiving a drinking straw, comprising:
- a circular end wall;
- a central panel integrally interconnected to said end wall;
- a substantially non-detachable pull tab hingedly interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel;
- a rupturable score line positioned on said central panel and defining a substantially circular opening having a diameter no greater than about 0.4375 inches which is adapted for receiving at the straw; and
- a vent opening positioned adjacent said substantially circular opening to provide venting in said small opening beverage can end during use, wherein when the straw is positioned in said small opening beverage can a portion of the drinking straw engages said substantially circular opening to retain the drinking straw within said small opening beverage can.
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, further comprising a reinforcing bead positioned proximate to a hinge line interconnecting said tab to said upper surface of said central panel to further inhibit detachment of said tab from said central panel;.

4. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said vent opening provides at least about 0.0004 inches of venting area when said substantially circular opening is occupied by the straw.
5. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, further comprising at least one embossing bead positioned proximate to a termination point of said score line to further inhibit detachment of said tab from said upper surface of said central panel.
6. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said tab is further interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel within said rupturable score line with a rivet.
7. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said substantially circular opening is created in said central panel by pulling said pull ring in one direction only.
8. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein the beverage can end is substantially spill-proof when said substantially circular opening is occupied by the straw.
9. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said central panel is oriented at a substantially right angle to a vertical orientation of a beverage can body.
10. (Currently Amended) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said pull ring has a lip is elevated at least about 0.030 inches from said upper surface of said central panel to facilitate grasping.
11. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said pull tab comprises a pull ring on one end and a nose on an opposite end, said nose hingedly interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel.

12. (Original) The small opening beverage can end of Claim 1, wherein said rupturable score line is positioned proximate to a central region of said central panel.

13. (Original) The small opening beverage can of Claim 1, further comprising a raised reinforcing bead which substantially encircles said small opening to shroud a leading edge of said substantially circular opening.

14. (Currently Amended) A metallic beverage can end closure with a small opening adapted for receiving a and retaining a drinking straw, comprising:

a circular end wall;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said end wall;

5 a score line positioned on said central panel which defines said small opening, said score line having a surface area no greater than about 0.1503 inches;

a substantially non-detachable tab having a pull ring on one end and a nose on an opposite end, said nose hingedly interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel, wherein when a force is applied to said pull ring said centrally disposed small opening is created in said central panel;

10 a rivet further interconnecting said nose to said upper surface of said central panel within said score line; and

a vent opening further defined by said score line which is positioned adjacent said centrally disposed small opening to provide adequate ventilation in said can end when said centrally disposed small opening is occupied by the straw; and wherein the drinking straw has an exterior diameter adapted to frictionally engage an internal diameter of said centrally disposed small opening to

substantially prevent vertical travel of the drinking straw after insertion in the centrally disposed small opening.

15. (Original) The beverage can end of Claim 14, wherein said vent opening has a minimal cross-sectional area of at least about 0.0004 inches .

16. (Original) The beverage can end of Claim 14, further comprising a reinforcing bead positioned adjacent at least a portion of said score line.

17. (Original) The beverage can end of Claim 14, wherein said score line extends beyond a hinge line of said nose and said upper surface of said central panel to further inhibit said tab from becoming inadvertently detached from said central panel.

18. (Original) The beverage can end of Claim 14, wherein said tab pull ring has a smooth upper surface and a smooth lower surface which are substantially void of sharp edges.

19. (Original) The beverage can end of Claim 14, further comprising a raised reinforcing bead which substantially shrouds said centrally disposed small opening.

20. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The combination of a metallic beverage can end closure with a small opening ~~for receiving and~~ a drinking straw adapted for insertion therein, the combination comprising:

a circular end wall adapted for interconnection to a beverage can body;

a central panel integrally interconnected to said circular end wall;

a substantially centrally disposed circular opening defined by a score line, said opening having a first diameter no greater than about 0.4375 inches;

a tab having a pull ring on a first end and a nose on a second end, said nose pivotally interconnected to an upper surface of said central panel at a first location and non-detachably interconnected to said upper surface of central panel with a rivet; and

5           said drinking straw having an exterior diameter with at least a portion which is substantially equivalent to said first diameter of said centrally disposed circular opening, wherein when said drinking straw is inserted into said centrally disposed opening said drinking straw is restricted from being removed therefrom as a result of frictional engagement with an edge of said substantially centrally disposed circular opening;

10           a vent opening positioned proximate to said small opening and said drinking straw for allowing ventilation into said can while a beverage is being extracted through said drinking straw.

21.       (Original) The metallic beverage can end and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, further comprising a reinforcing bead positioned proximate to a termination point of said score line to further inhibit detachment of said tab.

22.       (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, further comprising extending a score termination point beyond a hinge line where said nose is pivotally interconnected to said upper surface of said central panel to inhibit detachment of said tab.

23.       (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, wherein said vent opening has a cross-sectional area of at least about 0.0004 inches.

24.       (Currently Amended) The metallic beverage can end and drinking straw combination of Claim 20, wherein said straw has a corrugated mid-section which facilitates bending.